

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**

**MID-PACIFIC REGION**

**SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE  
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY AND  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS  
WATER AUTHORITY  
SUBSTITUTE WATER EXCHANGE**

**FONSI-07-12**

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**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY AND SAN JOAQUIN RIVER**  
**EXCHANGE CONTRACTORS WATER AUTHORITY**  
**SUBSTITUTE WATER EXCHANGE**

In accordance with section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the approval of an exchange is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) Number EA-07-12, *San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority and San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority Substitute Water Exchange*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

**BACKGROUND**

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (Water Authority), on behalf of five of its member agencies (participating South of Delta CVP contractors), has requested approval from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to exchange up to 11,000 acre-feet per year (AFY) of CVP water from the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors (Exchange Contractors) to the participating South of Delta Central Valley Project (CVP) Contractors. The exchange is made possible through the purchase of non-CVP water from the Merced Irrigation District (Merced ID) by the Water Authority on behalf of its participating South of Delta CVP Contractors. The water purchased from Merced ID will be used to fulfill the commitments of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (SJRECWA) to provide annual releases of their water supply to the San Joaquin River for fisheries flows as agreed to in the San Joaquin River Agreement (SJRA).

**FINDINGS**

**Surface Water Resources:** The Proposed Action/Project Alternative also will not require any changes or modifications to existing facilities or the construction of new facilities. Existing CVP supplies will not be altered. For each of the participating South of Delta CVP Contractors, the proposed action will provide supplemental water to meet district demands and will alleviate some of the effects of dry years and reduced allocations. Therefore, there will be no significant impacts to water resources.

**Surface Water Quality:** Westlands Water District will continue to utilize methods already in place for the treatment of drainage. As is the current circumstance, subsurface flows will not leave the district's boundaries and will not enter the San Joaquin River or any other aboveground water body. The San Luis Water District, via the Charleston Drainage District, will continue to utilize the Grassland Bypass Project for management of sub-surface drainage, while continuing along with others in the region to develop additional in-valley reuse areas and drainage solutions.

**Groundwater Resources:** The additional water supplied to each district as a result of the exchange will be very small when considering the overall needs and existing water usages by the participating CVP Contractors. This amount of water will, however, result in minor temporary beneficial impacts by lessening reliance on groundwater in this water year, thereby promoting the recharge of aquifers in the participating districts. Therefore, there will be no significant impacts to groundwater resources.

**Land Use and Growth Inducing Impacts:** The VAMP releases are for four years and subject to the conditions described under the Project Description (section 2.2.2). The short duration of the Proposed Action/Project, potential that no transfers will occur during one or more of the four years, and variability of the potential supply (ranging from 0-11,000 AF) in a given year are not suitable for the long-range planning that would be needed to promote land-use changes in either cropping patterns or conversions from agricultural to urban. The Proposed Action/Project Alternative will therefore be subject to the trends in land conversion and development as described under the No Action/No Project Alternative, but will not promote land use changes or induce growth.

**Biological Resources:** The Proposed Action/Project Alternative is comparable to the No Action/No Project Alternative in that requirements of the CVPIA biological opinion will continue to be met in the same manner as the No-Action/No Project Alternative, including continuation of ongoing species conservation programs. As with the No Action/No Project Alternative, the Proposed Action/Project Alternative will not result in the construction of new facilities or installation of structures that will alter current land uses and thereby affect listed species and critical habitats. Implementation of the Proposed Action/Project Alternative will not impact the production of agricultural crops or current land uses that support habitats for listed species. As with the No Action/No Project Alternative, no native lands or lands fallowed and untilled for three years or more will be converted to agricultural uses as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action/Project Alternative. No natural waterways that may harbor listed fishes will be affected by the Proposed Action/Project Alternative; there will be no change in diversions of water from the Delta under this alternative and there will be no changes in release of water down the Merced River or the San Joaquin River. These VAMP releases, which benefit out-migrating fall-run Chinook salmon, have already been analyzed under the EIR/EIS for the San Joaquin River Agreement. Therefore, there will be no effects on threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat.

**Cultural Resources:** The conveyance of CVP water will not harm any cultural resources. It will be conveyed in existing facilities and canals. As with the No Action/No Project Alternative, the Proposed Action/Project Alternative will not result in any construction or land altering/ground-disturbing activities beyond normal agricultural practices or in any substantial changes in reservoir operations that would expose buried resources, if present. Consequently, the proposed action has no potential to affect historic properties pursuant to the Regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

**Indian Trust Assets:** Due to the absence of Indian Trust Assets within the CVP service areas of the participating South of Delta CVP Contractors, such resources will be unaffected by implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative.

**Socioeconomic Resources:** The Action/Project Alternative is similar to the No Action/No Project Alternative in that it will not result in any new development or construction of facilities.

**Environmental Justice:** In examining impacts to the study area as a whole, and when compared to the No Action/Project Alternative, the Proposed Action/Project Alternative is not likely to disproportionately affect the human health or physical environment of minority or low-income populations.

**Cumulative Impacts:** Given the chronic shortages in allocations of CVP irrigation water to South of Delta CVP water service contractors, the Authority and its members have multiple programs to obtain supplemental supplies. These range from historic district to district transfers among CVP

contractors in the area, reallocation agreements among Authority members, other transfers from the Exchange Contractors to CVP water service contractors, and other similar transfers (SLDMWA). Under the Proposed Action/Proposed Project, the total of all such transfers will not exceed the total contract quantity under the participants' respective CVP water service contracts. Further, Reclamation retains the right to consent to any transfers utilizing CVP facilities, and such limit is a condition of any such consent.

The areas within the boundaries of participating South of Delta CVP Contractors are to varying degrees subject to increasing growth pressures as California's population and economy continue to expand. The water supplies provided under the Proposed Action/Proposed Project are limited to agricultural uses only. The participating districts are fully developed so, taking into consideration all available supplies, this increment will not promote development of new agricultural ground. Furthermore, the Proposed Action/Proposed Project will not indirectly fuel M&I growth or contribute incrementally to regional growth inducement because it lacks reliability to support such changes. It is available for a maximum period of only four years and highly variable, with potential deliveries ranging from 0-11,000 AF in a given year.

Taken together with all other similar temporary supplemental supplies and when combined with other activities within the range of potential impact and the physical study area, neither the No Action/No Project Alternative nor the Proposed Action/Project Alternative will add incrementally to existing environmental trends in the region of the Proposed Action/Project.